

St. Lazaria Seabird Project

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The volunteer would be part of an annual monitoring project in which participants collect data on nine or more species of seabirds. Work takes place on Saint Lazaria Island near Sitka, Alaska, where the field crew comprises the only human occupation. However, there are about a half million seabirds nesting in burrows and on ledges who are the neighbors. Needless to say, it's a spectacular concentration of a variety of birds, and marine mammals abound in the adjacent waters. St. Lazaria is one of many sites on the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge which are monitored annually to evaluate seabird populations on a long-term basis.

Here's a quick overview of our data collection needs: (1) Fork-tailed and Leach's storm-petrels and rhinoceros auklets -- Checks of permanent plots throughout the summer. Data parameters include - population trends, annual productivity, chick growth, and diet sampling. Much hands-on work as we reach into burrows to determine occupancy and temporarily remove chicks for measurements. (2) Common and thick-billed murre -- observations to determine egg-laying, hatching, and fledging done by spotting scope. Small number of eggs collected for contaminants analyses. Population counts conducted from land and skiff (motion sickness sensitivity not a plus!). (3) Pelagic cormorants and pigeon guillemots -- counts of adults (guillemots only), nests and chicks completed by skiff throughout the summer. Boating experience desirable. (4) Glaucous-winged gulls -- permanent plots are accessed by foot to document nest initiation, clutch size, and egg laying and hatch dates; adults counted throughout the summer and fledglings counted late in the season. (5) Tufted puffin -- transects surveyed periodically to determine burrow occupancy and annual productivity.

In addition, we record daily sightings of all birds and mammals. Crew members are expected to contribute to camp maintenance tasks. Interpretive skills helpful as incumbent will staff a kiosk in Sitka about every 7-10 days; this person will receive training on particular interpretive objectives.

The field season begins around 23 May. The ending date is somewhat flexible due to the variable nature of nesting activities but would prefer that the applicant be available through 15 September.

Training provided: boat safety and operations, bear and firearms safety.

Training suggested: CPR, basic first aid (will reimburse you for training taken elsewhere prior to the field season).

Desirable skills: boat operations, accurate data collection and recording, ability to work and live in relative isolation with few coworkers, use of mist-nets and bird-handling, ability to safely work in outdoor environs where conditions may be cool, wet, or windy, with steep or uneven terrain. Candidate should be in good physical condition.

Essentially all costs are covered. airfare is paid and food and lodging are provided.